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DEATH

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OF

Hon. George W. Patterson.

BORN IN LONDONDERRY, N. H.,

November 11, 1799,

DIED IN WESTFIELD, N. Y.,

October 15, 1879.



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DEATH OF HON. GEORGE W. PATTERSON.

(FROM THE WESTFIELD REPUBLICAN, OCTOBER 22, 1879.)

The community was startled as by an electric shock on Thursday morning, by learning of the death of Hon. George W. Patterson, who died at his home at ten o'clock on Wednesday night, October 15, 1879. And now, after the sharp pain of the first intelligence has passed, and the funeral obsequies have been held, with the assembling and the words of comfort and the tributes to a great life—it is scarcely possible to realize that the ruddy countenance, the happy smile, the hearty hand-shake, the commanding presence which for years has been a prominent feature in Westfield life, has forever gone out from our sight and lives only in memory. Gov. Patterson's death seemed, if such a thing be possible, characteristic of his life. The day came. He returned from a neighboring city whither he had gone in the morning, and without any ado he went to his bed unaided, and in a few hours he was gone—gone while busy—gone at the close of a day which he began with a smile—gone without a murmur or complaint—gone as expires the flame from the consumed wick—with a bright light even at the last.

On Wednesday morning Governor Patterson arose and, apparently, in his usual health, attended to various matters of business, being on the street at an early hour, and at 8:45 he, with Mrs. Patterson, took the train for Erie, where they had accepted an invitation to dine with Judge Marvin. In a short time he was attacked with chills, which continued through the day. A physician was called but no relief was experienced, and at three o'clock he and Mrs. Patterson returned to their home, arriving

there about 5 p. m. He expressed himself as very sick, having a dull heavy pain in every part of his body. Dr. Brown was called, who discovered that Gov. Patterson was suffering from an acute attack of congestion of the lungs. Dr. Brown had no hope of a recovery from the first. Dr. Strong was called in counsel and his judgment confirmed the conclusion arrived at by the former. Although the patient was conscious he failed rapidly, and ceased to breathe at ten. For some months Mr. Patterson had had a heart trouble (fatty heart), but had made little mention of it. This, in connection with the congestion of the lungs, doubtless produced the sudden fatal result.

It now becomes our duty to give briefly some facts in regard to this life which was grand in so many ways, and every phase of which is remembered with the greatest warmth and tenderness; but our hands almost refuse to pen the words which shall formally place Gov. Patterson, in our local affairs, among the dead.

Mr. L. L. Doty, private secretary of Gov. Morgan, has given in the History of Livingston County a sketch, which we reproduce in full:

Mr. Patterson was the youngest of four New England brothers (Judge Peter Patterson of Perry and Warsaw, Col. Robert Patterson of Perry and Westfield, Hon. William Patterson of Warsaw, Ex-Member of Congress) who settled in Livingston and Genesee Counties, N. Y., soon after the close of the war of 1812. They were men of sterling worth, broad and liberal in sentiment, and bore their full part in moulding and directing the social

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there he political tendencies of those early city lot, as well as in promoting the material enterprises of the settlers who rapidly changed our western wilds into well cultivated farms. Mr. Patterson was born at Londonderry, New Hampshire, on the 11th day of November, 1799. A noted ancestor of his, John Patterson, removed from Argyleshire, Scotland, about the year 1600 to the parish of Priestland in the county of Antrim, Ireland, where he purchased a large landed estate (a leasehold) of the Lord Antrim who became so distinguished a partisan of the Stuarts. A descendant of this John Patterson in the fourth generation, Peter by name, emigrated from Ireland, in 1737, to Londonderry, New Hampshire, and soon after married Grisey Wilson, whose grandfather had taken part in the noted siege of Londonderry, a fact that quite likely determined the name of their New England home. Peter had three sons, Robert, Thomas and John, the second of whom married Elizabeth Wallace. Five daughters and seven sons were born to them, of whom Peter was the eldest and the subject of our sketch the youngest. The maternal grandfather, James Wallace, came from the county of Antrim, Ireland, to the New Hampshire settlement, where he married Mary Wilson, of whom an incident is related: The vessel on which her parents had taken passage to this country, was captured in mid-ocean by a pirate, and while a prisoner the mother gave premature birth to this child. In a capricious moment the pirate captain offered to release both crew and passengers, on condition that the parents of the newly-born child would call it Mary. They assented, and after making the infant presents of jewelry and a piece of rich brocade silk, the pirate released the captives, who were no doubt ready enough to part company with so romantic a godfather.

The brocade, it may be added, became the wedding gown of the grown-

up Mary. [Gov. Patterson has a part of the brocade wedding dress in his possession.] The father of the future Lieutenant-Governor was a farmer in comfortable circumstances, who duly valued education. The son was therefore afforded such advantages as were offered by the common school and a neighboring academy, and at eighteen the father proposed to him, first, that he might go through college, or second, he might take a certain hundred and twenty acres of land near the homestead and make a farmer of himself. Both offers were declined, for with native independence he had already determined to swim without corks. He reasoned that the four years spent in college would subtract too large a sum from his early lifetime, and as to the land, New Hampshire farming as then conducted, seemed a pursuit well calculated to make a poor man of him to the end of his days. Neither proposition being accepted, his father was content to let him try the experiment of striking out for himself, and lived to see him a prosperous man of business, honored by his adopted State in her councils, and advanced to the second office in rank in the commonwealth. On his eighteenth birthday Mr. Patterson engaged to keep a district school in Pelham, near his home, for the winter; and on the 2d of June following, the winter's wages in his pocket, and accompanied by his brother William, and Wm. D. Barnett, now of Attica, he left New Hampshire for Western New York. A journey of three weeks brought them to the Genesee country. Mr. Patterson's first home was in the family of Daniel Kelly of Groveland, and "a better one no young man will ever find outside of his father's house." Yankee observation soon suggested to him that the great harvests of the finest wheat of the continent, being gathered when he reached this region, needed some better machinery for winnowing it than any then in use, and his first step was

to open a shop for the manufacture of fanning mills, on the present Benway farm in Groveland, then owned by Wm. Doty. This modest shop of logs stood near a small pond north of the house, which still goes by the name of Patterson pond. To be nearer his work he became a boarder at Doty's tavern, "where he had a good time generally with the sons of the landlord, two of whom were older and five younger than himself." And here at night, his day's work done and well done, he would meet a knot of the pioneers, men older than himself, who were in the habit of collecting about the broad and cheerful fireside of the log hostelry. The new comer was a favorite at once. No one could tell a more pithy story, and his trenchant discussion of politics, then running high, was listened to with satisfaction by those of his way of thinking, and with marked respect by his opponents. The latter were not the men to let an error of fact or argument go unchallenged, and Mr. Patterson here strengthened himself for debates in more notable assemblies. He spent but a year here.

His brother William had settled near Havens' tavern, and in the spring of 1818 he there joined him. In the year 1821 he lived in Warsaw, N. Y., where he was engaged in the fanning mill manufacturing business for himself. In 1822 he removed to Ripley, Chautauqua County, where he stayed until the fall of 1824, and then came back to Livingston County and purchased and occupied the farm now owned by Wm. Elliott in Leicester. The manufacture of fanning-mills continued to occupy his time until his removal to Westfield in 1841. How much of the superior market quality of Genesee wheat was due to the facilities his fanning-mill afforded in preparing it for eastern markets, it might be difficult to show, but it is certain that a very large part of the crops of this famous wheat growing section was fitted for market for many years by the use of "Patterson's" or "Patterson &

Dickey's" machines. Indeed, for all a generation, no other fanning mill was used. In the spring of 1821, Mr. Patterson had a quantity of wheat in store at Almond, N. Y., where it could not be sold for ready money. The cost of transporting it to Rochester, then the nearest cash market, was three shillings a bushel, and once there it was worth but two shillings and sixpence. Instead, therefore, of sending it to the Rochester market with the certainty of a sixpence margin on the wrong side, he exchanged it for boards on the Allegany river at Olean. Seven bushels of wheat at Almond for one thousand feet of boards at Olean, and on the opening of navigation he became a raftsmen for one trip only, floating down the Allegany and the Ohio rivers on board his raft in quest of a market. He sold at Cincinnati, and without assistance took the boards from the water and piled them on shore, receiving seven dollars a thousand in Miami Exporting Company's paper, a wild cat currency, worth on that particular day sixty cents on the dollar, the next day but fifty, and continued to rapidly depreciate until it became entirely worthless. On reaching home, his neighbors were anxious to know how he had made out. He had but one answer for all, "I have saved—myself." The "West" was just now opening, and the great stories of its opportunities were finding their way back to the settlements along the Genesee. As he was on the road to the newer region of promise, he determined to see for himself. So investing the meagre proceeds of his lumber in a horse, saddle and bridle, he "set out to find a better country than Livingston county," traveling through Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky, returning to Cincinnati after a month's absence. In going from Brookville, Indiana, to Fort Harrison, on the Wabash, by way of Indianapolis, he was compelled, for want of better accommodations, to sleep in the woods several nights, and to follow blazed trees for forty miles through the wilderness, by day, to reach the site of the present city of Indianapolis. On arriving

there he found the surveyors running out city lots, and quartered in a small log shanty, then the only hotel in the prospective capitol. From Cincinnati he returned by way of Chillicothe, Cleveland, Erie and Buffalo, the latter place being then a village of 700 inhabitants. The Erie Canal was "staked out," but not a shovelfull of earth had been removed from its bed in that (now) city. At that time there was but one steamboat on Lake Erie (the Walk-in-the-Water), and three small ones on the Ohio river above the falls, and not a single post-coach at any point in the United States, west of Buffalo. The mails, yet few and far between, were carried on horseback or on foot. Railroads were not yet born, or telegraphs thought of. After making this tour he returned to Livingston county, concluding that "the people of Livingston county might travel through the States, north of Carolina, and as far west as Kansas, and would find no spot equal to the valley of the Genesee."

Mr. Patterson for many years took an active part in politics, displaying the same zeal and conscience in that relation as in business affairs. His fidelity in every position, and his practical wisdom, secured him the unwavering support of an intelligent constituency through more than a quarter of a century, and until business engagements not only, but inclination, induced him to retire to private life. His first office was that of commissioner of highways of Leicester, and when the position of justice of the peace became elective, he was chosen to that office and retained it by re-election until he removed to Chautauque county. He was eight times elected to the Assembly from Livingston county by the Whigs, (in 1832-33-34-35-36-37-38-39 and 40) and was twice made speaker of that body while representing this county. He took a prominent part in the memorable presidential campaign of 1840, and at the great mass meeting held in Genesee in the autumn of that year, among the most noticeable features of the day was the farmer's dinner

of pork and beans, hard cider and corn bread, given out in the Leicester carry-all. Mr. Patterson had been speaking, and coming down from the speaker's stand—the roof of the log cabin—at precisely twelve o'clock, he mounted the wagon, took out a great tin horn, and in true farmer fashion called his tribesmen together, and amid a tumult of applause sat down with them to the substantial fare spread upon a bark table.

He was elected Lieutenant-Governor in 1848 on the Whig ticket, headed by Hamilton Fish, and presided over the sessions of 1849 and 1850 with remarkable dignity and fairness. His name has been repeatedly mentioned with the office of Governor, but never at his instance. Indeed it may be said with entire truth that office has uniformly sought him. He has never been a seeker after place. His sterling integrity, mature judgment, and withal his manliness of character, have long given him a high place among public men, and first and last have distinguished him many times as the fit man to act for the State on commissions and special service. Two or three instances may be given. The question of selecting a proper quarantine station at the port of New York, for the protection of the inhabitants of the metropolis and of the whole country from imported diseases, had long perplexed the Legislature and the executive authorities. To reach a solution of a question so important, a commission of eminent men were named of which Mr. Patterson was one, and after a careful examination they presented a plan which, while it avoided the local prejudices occasioned by the situation of so formidable a pest-house, reached the end in view in a practical way. Another subject of the first importance to the commerce of the port was referred to a commission of which he was a member. Several years ago encroachments of a serious nature threatened with danger the harbor of New York. Not only were the piers run far out into the North river, but structures had been commenced which

were essentially changing the channel and threatened to lessen the capacity of the grand roadstead. The records were overhauled, the public archives examined, to ascertain the original boundaries of the State. The exterior lines were then laid down and the report of the commission was adopted and confirmed, and remains the authority on the subject. The threatened evil was thereby averted. It will be recollected that in obedience to public sentiment the Legislature in 1860 appropriated a large sum of money to be expended in Kansas for the starving and suffering colonists of that much afflicted territory, while it was passing through its ordeal of trial. The proper expenditure of the grant was a delicate and difficult task, but the commission of which Mr. Patterson was one of the most active members, were eminently successful in meeting the needs of the settlers, while doing nothing to merit the adverse criticism of excited partisans.

In all the varied duties committed to Governor Patterson through a long public career, no breath has ever been raised against his integrity; no act has lessened the confidence of attached friends, and while enjoying many marks of general regard, he has never seemed more gratified than when, his duties ended, he might return to his home and to the important business charge committed to him by the Holland Land Company in superintending their landed interests, in which trust he succeeded Governor Seward when the latter was elected Governor. In February, 1825, he married Hannah Whiting Dickey, daughter of John Dickey of Leicester. He has two children. In person Mr. Patterson is but one inch short of six feet in height, and his weight of two hundred and twenty-five pounds is not at the expense of his activity or disproportioned to his well-knit frame.

A summary of the offices held by Mr. Patterson is as follows:

He was Commissioner of Highways, School Commissioner, Justice of the Peace,

Brigade Paymaster, and Supervisor of Leicester; was a member of the State Assembly eight years, the last two of which, 1839 and 1840, he was Speaker of the House; removed to Westfield, N. Y., in 1841, to take charge of the Chautauqua Land Office; was appointed Basin Commissioner at Albany by Gov. Seward, Harbor Commissioner at New York by Gov. Clark, and Quarantine Commissioner for the port of New York by Gov. Morgan; was a delegate to the National Republican Convention that nominated John C. Fremont for President, and to the National Republican Convention that renominated Abraham Lincoln for a second Presidential term; has been Supervisor of Westfield three years; President of Westfield Academy and President of the Board of Education of Westfield many years; represented the County of Chautauqua in the State Constitutional Convention in 1846; was elected Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New York in 1848; and in 1876 was elected to the 45th Congress as a Republican, receiving 16,910 votes against 10,601 votes for James Freeland, Democrat. He was a Director in the Buffalo & State Line Railroad from its organization, June, 1849, till its consolidation, May, 1867; and from that date till June, 1868, a Director in the Buffalo & Erie Railroad, now a part of the Lake Shore & Mich. Southern Railroad.

Reference is made above to Mr. Patterson making a trip into Kansas in 1860 to distribute funds, &c. Some years since a friend inquired of him in relation to this item of history, when he replied that Mr. Doty, who was private secretary of Governor Morgan, probably was not informed as to the particular object of this mission aside from that given, the fact being that a number of friends of the free State cause in Kansas determined to do all they could to make Kansas a free State. They accordingly raised a fund and securing the best man possible—Gov. Patterson—sent him to Kansas, where

he addressed mass-meetings and engaged other speakers for the same purpose, often participating in them *incog*. The result of this campaign is known, but this is the first publication of these facts which led to the result, and the people of Kansas probably have never known how much they owed to Governor Patterson for a correctly-guided public sentiment which after ward made Kansas a free State. When Gov. Patterson made his report to Gov. Morgan, he had one dollar left, (without taking anything for his own services,) which still stands to the credit of free Kansas.

An interesting incident is related in regard to his name. He was first named John, but the death of Gen. Washington, occurring shortly after, his name was changed to George Washington—a name which has always seemed most appropriately bestowed.

During the latter part of the war of 1812 he evinced his patriotic blood by enlisting a company of youth of his village. He was chosen captain and his company was given a place in the regiment of his brother Robert (who died some years since in Westfield) he being Colonel. The young company was said to have been the best drilled of any in the regiment. Hon. John Fisher, ex-member of Congress from Genesee county, was a member of the company and relates the circumstance. The father of Gov. Patterson was a commissioned officer in the Revolutionary war (the commission being preserved to this day in the family relics).

Of the life of Gov. Patterson at his home in Westfield it is impossible to speak particularly. His hospitality was in keeping with his generous nature, and he entertained as a prince. His board was bountifully spread, not for his own, but for the enjoyment of others; and it was a rare treat to spend an hour at his home, where the most delicate of social grace was illumined

by his pointed emphatic converse and lively repartee. When a subject was in danger of a gloomy turn, he was sure to come to the rescue with an anecdote or a pleasant reminiscence.

He was ever foremost in good works. His hand, which had been prospered wonderfully, was always ready to distribute, and a worthy needy person never went empty away. Nor was this all; in his extreme generosity he continually sought out objects of benevolence. In all his giving, which seemed a part of his life, no one was ever humiliated in being a recipient. There can be no doubt but there are to-day scores of people who received regularly at his hand who have not known whence came the aid which helped in an important way toward a comfortable existence. But the generosity which was evident toward the poor was not limited to them alone. Everything that had in it the advancement of the cause of education, temperance or morality found in him a substantial supporter. The public school was always an object of deep interest to him, and he gave many days of close attention and hard work to our own Academy and Union School. His largest gifts were usually to the church. While he was not a church member, his life was a pattern of good works. He was strictly honest to the last degree. He revered the Sabbath and was a constant attendant upon the Sabbath day services, and was most humble in all that he did, and claimed nothing of merit for himself. The benevolent work of the church had his sympathy, which was expressed not by words but by deeds.

Gov. Patterson's life had in it none of those dark blots which so frequently mar the lives of public men. His public life was absolutely spotless and his private walks were more beautiful upon the closer scrutiny. It cannot be wondered that a gloom has come over our community, and that the sense of a per-

sonal loss has entered every household. Many more pretentious men will claim attention, but our village may never again know one so gifted in those things which pertain to public duties, and yet so generous, kind and thoughtful in private, as was this most lamented friend. Of his life of fifty-five wedded years we dare not speak, and into the home circle we will not intrude, knowing that he was the ideal of the household—the strong man loved. We can but offer the assurance of a sympathy which is universal, in the loss of one who filled a house with light and life with his presence, and whose death must be like the going down of the sun at noonday; and long will it be before the memory of Gov. Patterson will fade from the memory of those who knew, who loved, and who honored him.

RESOLUTIONS.

Westfield, N.Y., Oct. 17, 1879.

At a meeting of the Trustees of the First Presbyterian Society of Westfield, called for the purpose of recording their sympathy with the bereaved family of the late ex-Lieut. Gov. George W. Patterson, whose remains are to-day laid in the grave, and to express our sense of the bereavement we suffer in his departure from earth; the following resolutions were adopted:

1st. That inasmuch as for many years he was associated with us in the financial management of the affairs of our corporation, and especially in times of severe trial when twice we were called upon to erect sanctuaries to take the place of those which had been destroyed by fire, in which his wise counsels, liberal benefactions and indefatigable labors accomplished so much towards carrying us successfully through our trials—we will cherish his memory with grateful hearts.

2d. That we tender to his family our heartfelt sympathies in this period of severe affliction.

THURLOW WEED'S TRIBUTE.

In a letter to the *N. Y. Tribune*, the venerable Thurlow Weed, the intimate friend of Gov. Patterson for over fifty years, says:

"SIR: My heart was deeply saddened this morning by a telegram from Westfield, Chautauqua County, announcing the death of George W. Patterson in his eightieth year. * * * Mr. Patterson acted for many years as an agent for the English proprietors who purchased the Holland Land Company's interest in Chautauqua County. His thorough business capacity and habits enabled him first to adjust the difficulties between the settlers and the proprietors, and then to close up the business in a manner highly satisfactory to both parties. Mr. Patterson's public life terminated with the last Congress, of which he was a member

"All the elements and qualities which elevate and adorn human life were harmoniously blended in the character of George W. Patterson. His life was not only entirely blameless but eminently useful. To those who knew him as I did no form of eulogium will be deemed inappropriate. As a citizen, as the head of a family, and as a public servant, he was a model man. In the discharge of legislative duties he was conscientious and patriotic. He was always in his seat, and no bad, defective, equivocal or suspicious bill ever evaded or escaped his vigilant and watchful eye. He had troops of friends, and, so far as I know or believe, was without an enemy. In private life he was exceptionally faultless. Without making proclamation of temperance, he was always a cold water drinker. Whether he was or not a church member, he certainly lived the life of a Christian. His bereaved widow, son and daughter will find consolation in the reflection that they have enjoyed his affectionate and devoted guidance and protection for many happy years, and that when called on to render an account of his stewardship below a seat will be assigned to him above among the 'good and faithful.' Between the deceased and the writer of this feeble tribute to his virtues and memory a close friendship existed for more than half a century."

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